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Viewing cable 06BEIRUT2428, TFLE01: HIZBALLAH EXPERTS SAY EARLY END TO

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06BEIRUT2428**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BEIRUT2428	2006-07-20 16:47	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Beirut

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 002428

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/SINGH/HARDING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/20/2016
TAGS: [IR](#) [IS](#) [LE](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: TFLE01: HIZBALLAH EXPERTS SAY EARLY END TO
FIGHTING WOULD BE A VICTORY FOR HIZBLLAH

SUMMARY

11. (C) On July 20, econoff polled three Hizballah experts on the party's strategy and next steps in the current fighting with Israel. All three agreed that if the fighting ended now, Hizballah would appear victorious. As of July 20, much of Hizballah's military capabilities and support in the Shia community remain intact. If the Shia community suffers more, then Hizballah will feel more compelled to accept a face-saving cease-fire. The experts said that if a cease-fire cannot be reached, Hizballah would welcome a ground war with Israel. End summary.

HIZBALLAH LOOKING
FOR A WAY OUT

12. (C) On July 20, econoff interviewed three prominent experts on Hizballah: Dr. Timur Goksel, who was UNIFIL spokesman for 24 years; Mohammad Salam, a journalist based in Sidon who has covered southern Lebanon since the 1970s; and Dr. Ahmad Moussalli, expert on Islamic extremist movements at AUB. All three experts assessed Hizballah's strategy as looking for a face-saving way to end the fighting.

13. (C) Goksel, who has discussed the situation with some of the more intellectual members of Hizballah reported that there is some dissension in the party about the abduction operation that began the fighting. They think Hizballah's military wing went too far and are worried about the devastation to southern Lebanon and south Beirut (which Goksel described as looking worse than 9/11). These moderate Hizballah members are anxious about how to explain to their constituents why all this suffering is necessary. According to Goksel, Hizballah took measures to evacuate the neighborhood where their party headquarters was located shortly before the Israeli airstrikes came. As a result, there were surprisingly few casualties in that usually densely inhabited area.

14. (C) As a result of this sentiment, Goksel assesses that Hizballah would accept a face-saving way to stop. A face-saving initiative would probably have to come from Iran or Syria. In contrast to the misery of their Shia constituents, Hizballah members are elated that their military wing is still largely intact, according to Goksel. If the fighting ends now, Hizballah would retain much of its military strength.

15. (C) Salam believed that Hizballah would seek a cease-fire when its Shia constituency tells it they have had enough punishment. According to Salam, Sunnis, Druze, and Christians are turning on Hizballah, but that is irrelevant because Hizballah only cares about its popularity within the Shia community. Hizballah does not yet sense enough Shia backlash yet, but when it does it will quickly seek a face-saving way to achieve a cease-fire, according to Salam.

16. (C) Moussalli said that Israeli military campaign against Hizballah has not proven decisive. If the fighting ends now, Hizballah comes out the winner for having withstood the Israeli aerial onslaught. Hizballah is losing support in the Sunni, Druze, and Christian communities, but its support among Shia is still very high.

IF NO END, GROUND
BATTLE WELCOMED

17. (C) If there is no face-saving way to end the fighting, Hizballah would welcome an Israeli ground invasion, our experts agree. This would be the decisive battle, according to Moussalli, and one that Hizballah is confident about. Goksel reported that Hizballah fighters are itching to fight

Israel on the ground, as that front would be a more level playing field.

FELTMAN